

Summary

A dense population of the globally near-threatened and little-known Jerdon's Bushchat *Saxicola jerdoni* (totalling 100–200 pairs over 6 sq. km) was discovered in March 1996 breeding amongst a complex of scrub dominated islands in the Mekong channel at Paksang, 60 km upstream of Vientiane. Small numbers of birds were still present in mid July when most of the breeding area had been submerged by the seasonally rising river water. The remainder of the birds could not be located on the adjacent dry land and appear to disperse out of the area. This habitat differs greatly from that recorded in Laos during the only previous observations, made during 1925–1945, but such breeding habitat has been described previously in Burma. The species is probably under no imminent threat at the site unless the rapidly expanding practice of removing sediment from the channel during the dry season extends upstream of the site. Further surveys are urged, both in the Mekong and its major tributaries, and in the montane scrub in the north of Laos which was previously reported to hold the species. These are particularly important in view of the paucity of recent records from elsewhere in the species' range.

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Range extension of the Large-headed Flatbill *Ramphotricon megacephala* with comments on its distribution

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The Large-headed Flatbill *Ramphotricon megacephala* is patchily distributed in the forests of the Andes (western and central Venezuela, eastern and northern Colombia on east and west slopes, eastern Ecuador), western Amazonia (southeastern Peru, northern Bolivia, western Amazonian Brazil), humid montane Atlantic forest in southeastern Brazil (eastern Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro south to São Paulo), subtropical deciduous forests of eastern Paraguay (Alto Paraná, Canendiyu), and northeastern Argentina in Misiones (Ridgely & Tudor 1994, Hayes 1995, Pacheco 1995). This inconspicuous small flycatcher (13 cm; 13–17 g) seems to be largely linked to bamboo patches in all the regions where it occurs, perching low in the dense interior of the thickets, from which it sallies out for insects on bamboo foliage and stems (Parker 1982, 1984, pers. obs). Though difficult to observe (it remains motionless for long periods in the dense understory), it is readily detected when calling a ventriloquial disyllabic *whu-hoo*, mainly in early morning and late afternoon (Parker 1984, pers. obs).

On 22 October 1995, at 06.55 hrs, I tape-recorded an individual of *Ramphotricon megacephala* (ALPA 21/10, deposited in the Library of Neotropical Sounds of the State University of Campinas—UNICAMP [ASN]) in a riparian forest with an understory of dense bamboo thickets, about 120 km northwest of the town of Barra do Garças (15°53'S, 52°15'W, on the western bank of the upper Araguaia river in southeastern Mato Grosso State, central Brazil). The riparian forest was on the margin of the Mortes river at an altitude of about 350 m in the Xavante Indian reserve of São Marcos. The dominant vegetation of the area is open *cerrado* (savanna-like vegetation), with riparian forests having a variable amount of understory bamboo cover.

The nearest known locality where *R. megacephala* has been reported is Alta Floresta in northern (Amazonian) Mato Grosso State (Ridgely & Tudor 1994), about 700 km northwest of the São Marcos Indian reserve. I compared the voice of the bird from São Marcos reserve with two other birds recorded in Ji-Paraná (Rondônia State, Amazonian

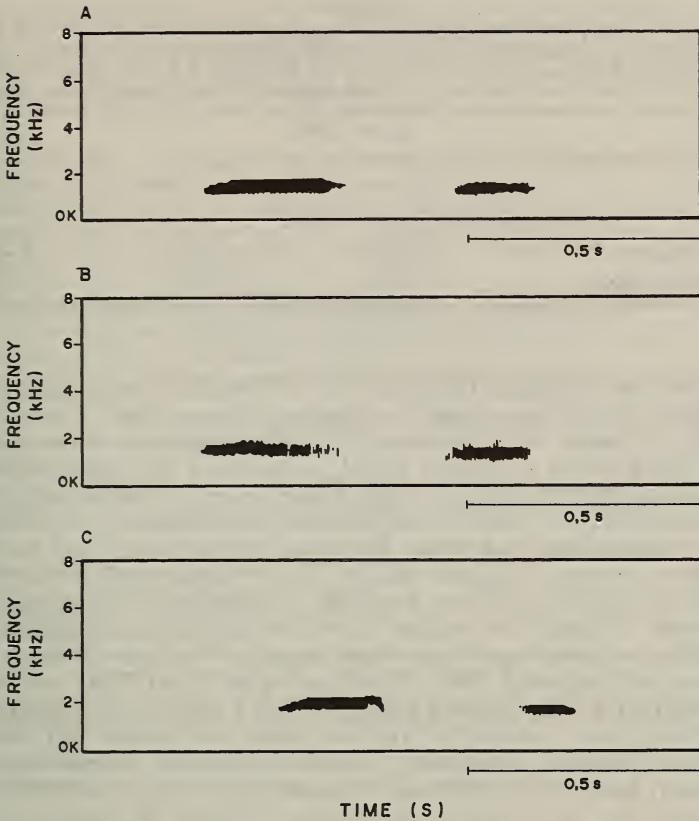


Figure 1. Sonograms of the song of three populations of the Large-headed Flatbill *Ramphotrigon megacephala* in Brazil. A, Ji-Paraná, Rondônia State, Amazonia (JV 495/5b); B, Barra do Garças, Mato Grosso State, central Brazil (ALPA 21/10); C, Parque Estadual Intervales, São Paulo State, southeastern Brazil (ALPA 26/1+2). All recordings are deposited in the Library of Neotropical Sounds (ASN) at the Bioacoustical Laboratory of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas-UNICAMP. Sonograms were made on a MacIntosh Classic coupled to a MacRecorder Sound System 2.0.5.

Brazil; JV 495/5b-ASN) and Parque Estadual Intervales, Capão Bonito (southern São Paulo State, Brazil; ALPA 26/1+2-ASN). The song structure of the São Marcos bird (the disyllabic *whu-hoo*) is very similar to that of the birds from Amazonia (Rondônia) and southeastern Brazil (Fig. 1). Though a larger sample size is needed, preliminary measures of the duration of the notes of the song of the São Marcos bird indicate its closer relationship to Amazonian birds (Table 1).

The range extension here reported fills a gap in the spotty distribution pattern of *R. megacephala*, which until 1939 was known only from a few specimens from southeastern Brazil and adjacent